

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

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others (see Pl. 4). Here the women work, cook, and gossip; the men may join them if they wish, except the boys wearing the *upi* (leaf hat connected with puberty ceremonies), to whom all that portion of the village is rigorously taboo. 342 562 784

The interior is alike in all. There are no dividing partitions. The floor is the bare earth, trodden hard. The only furniture is a row of broad planks propped up on small logs, along one side of the hut, which serve as beds. Short lengths of bamboo are used as pillows. Between each plank is just space enough for a small fire. There is probably a place for roasting taro with the aid of hot stones, the native oven, at the farther end of the hut near the women's entrance. Cooking pots, the cleaned-out coco-nut shells used to store water, packs for carrying taro, and a few personal possessions, lie on the ground; sometimes a plank is laid across two poles to form a shelf on which such objects can be kept out of the way. Bundles containing more valuable property hang from the rafters, tied up in banana fibre or old loin-cloths. Every returned plantation hand is the proud possessor of a wooden box with lock and key, part of the kit which must be provided by the employer for each of his 'boys' when they 'sign on', which he displays in a prominent position. All sorts of treasures such as medicine bundles, knives, &c., are stowed away between the thatch and the supporting rafters. Nets and banana-fibre straps for carrying burdens hang over the cross-poles that form part of the framework of the hut, and there is usually a basket containing some pieces of cold taro in case any one feels hungry at a time when it is not convenient to cook. 342 [352] [372] [415] [352] [445] [465] [286] [251]

As a rule, the household consists of father, mother, and children. In the case of polygynous marriages, each wife will usually have her own hut, particularly if she has children, and the husband distributes his company as he pleases, spending a certain amount of time with the woman who ranks as his chief wife, but most of it with the one who for the time being stands highest in favour. A wife who is old or incapacitated, or one whose children have all started out for themselves, will often share a hut with one of the other wives, not always amicably. In some of the Buka villages large huts are now built, housing all the wives of one man; the interior of these is partitioned off into rooms for each. An aged parent of either sex may also form part of the household, the taboo between mother-in-law and son-in-law being relaxed when the former is old. [592] 595 [342] 512 606

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[45] Before he goes into the bush, each novice is put under the care of an older man who is called his *amro*. The *amro* are all appointed by the *tsunaun*. Any adult man is eligible for this office. He is supposed to belong to a clan different from that of the novice, but this rule is not strictly adhered to for in the list I obtained of novices and their *amro* belonging to the village of Kurtatchi, several pairs were of the same clan. One informant said that a boy might have his brother for his *amro*, in which case the rule obviously could not apply. Under such circumstances no payment is made to the *amro*, but if he be not a brother, the novice's parents must provide his *amro* with a string of *imun* and his food during the period of seclusion. If there are only a few novices, each has an *amro* to himself, but if there are a great many, one man may be *amro* to two, three, or four boys.

The *amro* looks after the boy during his seclusion in the bush, remaining constantly with him, seeing that he keeps the rules, that he has food, &c. He also puts paint on the boy's hair and oils his skin. His duties are not confined to the period of seclusion. As long as the boy wears the *upi*, it is the business of the *amro* to put paint on his hair for a dance, and to keep an eye on him generally. Any one who is acting as *amro* must not go away for any length of time from the village where the novice lives. Pirier, one of the young men at Kurtatchi, who stood in that position in regard to two of the boys, went off to work on a plantation, but Pinari, the *tsunaun*, sent for him back. After the *watawut* has taken place this rule is less strictly adhered to.

A man who has acted as *amro* but whose charge has finished all the ceremonies and taken off the *upi* is called *kwoigin*, and to these men also special duties are assigned while the novices are in the bush; in particular, they act as messengers between the place of seclusion and the village, bringing food to the boys and their *amro*, who may not come into the village.

The novices are called *matfian*. At first they do not sleep in the bush, but spend the day there, going off at dawn, and returning to the village after dark. They cannot, however, go back to their mother's hut; they must sleep in the *tobar* belonging to their respective clans. While they are in the *tobar*, they must not talk above a whisper; it would be a very bad thing for the women to hear their voices. This time is called *pinpin*. It lasts for several days.

When the *pinpin* period is over, the boys remain in the bush

881 At this stage in the proceedings I was reluctantly obliged to leave Kurtatchi as my time was at an end. The remainder of the preparations for the *watawutſ*, and the ceremony itself, are therefore described not from observation but from information received from the natives, who professed to be sorry that I was not going to see it. The details given in the following pages have been verified with the utmost care, but it is impossible to know the extent of their incompleteness.

MAKING THE *UPI* FOR THE *WATAWUTſ*

- 881 As soon as the 'long house' is completed, word is sent to the
294 people of the mountains to come down and help to make the
621 special *upi* with the red patterns which must be used for the *watawutſ* (Pl. 27). The Kurtatchi people call for this service from the Hahon (Wawon in their dialect, which has no *h*) who live in the foot-hills behind the north coast. The men making the *upi* do not, however, work in the *tobar tſan*, but in the ordinary *tobar*, the only condition being that the owner of the *tobar* must possess a number of pigs—not for use, but as a sign of his prestige. One *tobar* in the village of Kurtatchi could not be used for this purpose because its owner had no pigs. The other two divided between them the making of the *upi* for the boys of the different villages of the group. For boys from Tabut and Wantoa the hats were to be made in the *tobar* belonging to Kakari, of the clan Nakarib, for those of Munlus, Baniata, Bona, Mosang, and Togaragar, in the *tobar* belonging to Wasē, clan Naboin. For the boys of Kurtatchi, the hats are made in the *tobar* of the clan to which each belongs.
- [554] One hat is made for each boy who is to take part in the ceremony. These special *upi* are called *masōōō*. The Hahon people are paid for cutting the patterns. In the olden days this payment was made
- [465] with specially prized stone axe-heads, but nowadays with trade knives, and also sometimes with loin-cloths and other trade goods.
- [436] Ceremonial currency, either of shell or teeth, must never be used for this payment (perhaps because of its use in connexion with marriage?). The *awro* make the payments to the Hahon people, and are subsequently repaid by the mothers of the initiates.
- 881 The time occupied in making these hats is a period of great
294 tension throughout the village. While the work is in progress the
764 workers must stay in the *tobar*, and the village must be kept as silent as possible. No sweeping or cleaning must be done. Each

ADOLESCENT BOYS

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Each boy carries in his right hand a carved lime-pot,¹ hanging by a string. At this stage in the proceedings the pots must be empty of lime. They are filled by the *kwigin*, in the *tobar*, after the close of the ceremony. The right hand also holds a bunch of the aromatic leaves called *tutsuir*, which he has been forbidden to use since putting on the hat. In his left hand he holds two areca-nuts on a stalk, and in his mouth a catkin of the betel-pepper, which has also been denied him. These prohibitions are now at an end. [881] [445] [824]

The *amro* walk round in wheel formation, as at an ordinary *kōma*, with their charges on their shoulders. All the men join in it, but the women do not dance, they keep up a ritual wailing, just as they do for a death. When the men have been round once, the procession goes back inside the palisade. By this time it is getting light. The *amro* have a short time for rest, then they take the boys on their shoulders again, and the *kōma* is repeated for another two rounds. Then the boys are carried to the front of the long house, and are offered water by their *amro*, which they must only pretend to drink, and taro, which they must only pretend to eat. After this, which again is said to be a safeguard against their being 'poisoned', they go into the long house and are given pig, taro, and ceremonial pudding to eat in reality. The visitors from other villages are provided with supplies of areca-nut and go back to their own homes. [535]

Later in the morning, all the initiates, still wearing their new hats with the red patterns, make a round of the village and go inside the huts of the married people, which they have not been able to do since they first put on the *upi*. Then they come back to the long house, go inside the palisade, take off the decorated hats and put on plain ones. The decorated ones are kept in the permanent *tobar*, and are put on for special occasions. Boys who are *tusans* may, if they wish, wear decorated hats all the time, but must keep them covered with an outer layer of leaves. The outer covers are made for them by their *amro*, who do not receive payment for this service. Fig. 9 is a boy's drawing of a *kōma* connected with the *watarutsf*, at which the boys are wearing the decorated *upi*. [292] [565] [465]

The long house, the palisade, the *roror* trees, the wooden figures,

¹ For description of these lime-pots see p. 432 and Pl. 72. One of those figured (on left in second row) has actually been used in a *watarutsf* ceremony, but as a rule those that have been so used are very highly prized by their owners who are unwilling to part with them. Another had similar human figures, but placed vertically instead of horizontally.

SOME ECONOMIC MATTERS

437 showing the ramifications of the system. The people of Petats obtained some pots at Malasang in exchange for women's hoods.

438 The pots they bartered to the people of Lontis in exchange for taro. The Lontis people used the pots to pay for pigs, which they intended to sell, as opportunity offered, for ceremonial currency made of shell disks (*beroan*), which was destined eventually to form part of the property changing hands in respect of a marriage.

435 Purchases from white men or Chinese store-keepers are usually paid for in copra, the rates varying with the current market-price of that commodity. A certain fixed part of the wages of indentured

439 465 labourers is paid in shillings, some of which also find their way into the store-keepers' tills, though the main use of them is to pay the 651 Government head-tax of 10s. on each adult male. The goods generally bought are sticks of tobacco, knives and axes, loin-cloths, trade beads, belts, and sometimes, if a man has recently returned from labour and money is plentiful, mouth-organs and bottles of scent.

435 Pigs are sometimes purchased locally from white planters or 439 Chinese store-keepers. One of the latter, who had a store on the mainland of Buka nearly opposite Petats, used to make the natives pay as much as £10 or £12 in English (or Australian) money for a large fat pig, when he knew that it was specially wanted for some great occasion.

436 Sticks of tobacco (plug twist) and, to a smaller extent, shillings are now coming into favour as a means of trading among the natives themselves, 3 sticks of tobacco being recognized as the equivalent of a shilling, or goods to that value. They also recognize as a unit the sum of £5, which they call, using pidgin-English, a *fius*. This word is sometimes rather arbitrarily used when it is required to indicate a large sum, e.g. it may be quoted as the price of a pig.

CEREMONIAL CURRENCY

Two kinds of ceremonial currency are in use, one much more highly valued than the other.

436 The less valuable kind consists of strings of shell disks ground 171 flat and pierced with a central hole. This type of currency is found over a large area of Melanesia. Although it is made in other islands of the Solomon group (Codrington, 1891, p. 325, Ivens, 1927,

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SOME ECONOMIC MATTERS

431 sex). This applies also to the extension of that relationship beyond
602 the scope of the blood tie as it appears in genealogies (this is dis-
cussed on p. 33). No direct payment is offered or expected in
such a case, but the recipient is, of course, liable to be called upon
in his turn.

431 Apart from this, the native expects neither to give nor to receive
'something for nothing', unless it be a smouldering ember, which
corresponds to our asking for a match.

• [465] An exception to this occurs in the case of plantation labourers
returning from their three years of service. A certain proportion
of their earnings is paid to them as a lump sum at the end of their
'time', and this they usually expend on knives, mouth-organs, and
such other trifles as their hearts delight in. But as soon as they
return to their own village, friends and relations crowd around,
expecting the treasures to be divided amongst them, so that very
soon the unfortunate owner has little to show for his labour except
the memory of having been for a brief moment the hero of the
village.

RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES

[576] There are many occasions on which a presentation of some article,
usually a package of ceremonial pudding, is reciprocated by the
return, at some future, but not too far distant, time, of a precisely
similar article. It would be a gross breach of etiquette to omit to
'back' such a gift in appropriate fashion. When we went to meet
the women of Baniu to trade with them for good taro stalks for
planting, we took with us some large packets of ceremonial pudding
to give to one of them in return for some that had been given on
the occasion of Muben's marriage to Kakari several months before.

PROPERTY

Land.

[423] The land belongs to the village group. But the rights in it are
425 vested in the *truman i'an*, the man of greatest importance in the
565 village or group of hamlets. He may sell it, either to other natives
or to white men, but in practice he would consult the older men of
the village before arranging such a transaction. No such deal went
through during my residence, and I have no details of prices or
media of payment.¹ Pinari had a grudge against Karabun, the

¹ The District Officer now supervises all buying of land by white people from
natives, and adjudicates over the price, which is paid in money. Some of the